

## **1. Green Hydrogen Microgrid Project**

### **Why in News?**

- National Thermal Power Corporation Ltd has recently awarded the country's first green hydrogen microgrid project at its Simhadri (near Visakhapatnam) plant in Andhra Pradesh.

### **Highlights:**

- This unique project configuration is designed in-house by NTPC. It would be a precursor to large-scale hydrogen energy storage projects. It is in line with India's vision to become carbon neutral by 2070.
- The hydrogen would be produced using the advanced 240 kW Solid Oxide Electrolyser by taking input power from the nearby Floating Solar project.
- Earlier, NTPC had commissioned the development of India's biggest floating solar plant in Telangana's Ramagundam.
- The hydrogen produced during the day will then be stored at high pressure and would be electrified using a 50 kW Solid Oxide Fuel Cell.
- A solid oxide fuel cell (or SOFC) is an electrochemical conversion device that produces electricity directly from oxidizing a fuel.
- The project will be useful for further studying and deploying multiple microgrids in various off-grid and Strategic Locations of the Country.
- Clean energy development is an important weapon against climate change and limiting its Devastating Effects. It will open prospects for decarbonizing the far-off regions of the country such as Ladakh, J&K, etc., which are dependent on diesel generators.
- Decarbonizing means removing or reducing the amount of gaseous carbon compounds released in the Environment.
- NTPC Renewable Energy Limited (NTPC REL) has also inked a pact with the Union territory of Ladakh for a green hydrogen mobility
- Hydrogen fuel can be a game-changer for the energy security of India, which imports 85% of its oil and 53% of Gas Requirements.
- To promote clean fuels, India is considering making it mandatory for fertilizer plants and oil refineries to purchase Green Hydrogen.
- NTPC is also looking to leverage hydrogen for transportation by mixing the fuel with natural gas for the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network

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## **2. Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**

### **Why in News?**

- Demand has recently been raised in Parliament to include the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to safeguard land, employment, and cultural identity of the local population.

### **Highlights**

- The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 was introduced to bifurcate the State into two separate union territories of Jammu and Kashmir (with legislature), and Ladakh (without legislature).
- The administration of the UT of Ladakh region is now completely in the hands of bureaucrats. The government now looks even more distant than Srinagar.
- The changed domicile policy in Jammu and Kashmir has raised fears in the region about its own land, employment, demography, and cultural identity.
- The UT has two Hill councils in Leh and Kargil, but neither is under the Sixth Schedule.
- Their powers are limited to collection of some local taxes such as parking fees and allotment and use of land vested by the Centre.
- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has recommended that the Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh be included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- NCST, a constitutional body to safeguard socio-cultural rights of Scheduled Tribes, was entrusted with the responsibility of examining the status of tribals in Ladakh, by the Centre.
- If included, Ladakh will be the only UT in the Sixth Schedule. Also, bestowing such a status to Ladakh would require a constitutional amendment.
- The Sixth Schedule under Article 244 provides for the formation of autonomous administrative divisions — Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) — that have some legislative, judicial, and administrative autonomy within a state.

## **3. Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)**

### **Why in News?**

- Recently, Maharashtra has topped the list of states with maximum number of beneficiaries under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY), followed by Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

### Highlights:

- It was launched in November 2020 to boost employment in the formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid-19 recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.
- It provides subsidy for provident fund contribution for adding new employees to establishments registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).
- The organizations of up to 1000 employees would receive employee's contribution (12% of wages) & employer's contributions (12% of wages), totalling 24% of wages, for two years.
- Employers with over 1,000 Employees will get employees' contribution of 12%, for two years.
- The subsidy amount under the scheme will be credited upfront only in Aadhaar-seeded EPFO accounts (UAN) of new Employees.
- Establishments registered with EPFO will be eligible for the benefits if they add new employees compared to the reference base of employees as in September 2020.
- Establishments, with up to 50 Employees, would have to add a minimum of two new employees.
- The organizations, with more than 50 employees, would have to add at least five Employees.
- Any new Employee joining employment in EPFO registered establishments on monthly wages less than Rs. 15,000.
- Those who left their job between 1<sup>st</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and are employed on or after 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020.

## **4. The price of food must figure in the policy**

### Why in News?

- The essential challenge of public policy for agriculture- the high price of food remains Unsolved.

### Implications of High Food Prices:

- Increases poverty: A higher price of food increases poverty, especially as the rice and wheat supplied through the PDS constitute only a part of the total expenditure on food of the Average Indian household.

- Reduces the expenditure on other item: For the household, a high price of food crowds out Expenditure on other items ranging from health and education to non-agricultural goods.
- This prevents the market for non-agricultural goods from expanding.
- This was one of the first discoveries in economics, made by the English economist David Ricardo about two centuries ago.

### **Rising Food Prices in India:**

- An indication of the elevation of the price of food in an economy is the share of food in a household's budget.
- In a global comparison we would find that this share is very large for India.
- Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2016) show that this share ranges from over 30% for India to less than 10% for the U.S. and the U.K.
- This is in line with Ricardo's understanding of how economies progress i.e., as food gets cheaper, growth in the non-agricultural economy is stimulated.
- Agricultural policy in India has remained quite unaccountable in the face of a rising relative price of food.
- Impact on manufacturing sector: Arguably, the high price of food has been a factor in the disappointing lack of expansion of the manufacturing sector in India despite repeated efforts to bring it about.

### **Changes needed in Agricultural Policy:**

- Both from the point of view of food security for low-income households and the dynamism of the non-agricultural sector, agricultural policy cannot ignore the price at which food is produced.
- Focus on improving the yield: The fact of low agricultural yield in India by comparison with the rest of the world has been known for long, and little is done about it.
- Management of soil nutrients and moisture: A superior management of soil nutrients and moisture, assured water supply and knowledge inputs made available via an extension service would be crucial.
- Raising yields will ensure profitability without raising producer prices, which will inflate the food subsidy bill.

### **How Government Intervention Created Problems**

- Given the importance of food for our survival, this justifies public intervention in Agriculture.

- The issue is the design and scale of this intervention.
- In the mid-sixties, when India was facing food shortage that could not be solved through trade, a concerted effort was made to raise domestic agricultural production.
- **Profitability through MSP:** It introduced the strategy of ensuring farm profitability through favourable prices assured by the state.
- Further, it entrenched the belief that it is the farmer's right to have the state purchase as much grain as the farmer wishes to sell to the state agency.
- **Created Grain Stockpile:** This has resulted in grain stockpiles far greater than the officially announced buffer-stocking norm.
- These stocks have often rotted, resulting in deadweight loss, paid for by the public through taxes or public borrowing.
- **Supply more than Demand:** Finally, with all costs of production reimbursable and all of output finding an assured outlet, supply has outstripped demand.
- **Damage to Natural Environment:** This has led to unimaginable pressure on the natural environment, especially water supply.

## **5. Conflation between duties and rights**

### **Why in News?**

- There has been growing advocacy for the integration of duty with rights. On Constitution Day last month, many Union Ministers used the occasion to underline this proposal.

### **What do rights come with Duty Mean?**

- It is a basic proposition that all rights come with duties.
- But those duties are quite distinct from the meaning ascribed to them in the popular discourse. When a person holds a right, she is owed an obligation by a duty-bearer.
- For example, when citizens are promised a right against Discrimination, the Government is obliged to ensure that it treats everybody with equal care and concern.
- Similarly, the guarantee of a right to freedom of speech enjoins the state to refrain from interfering with that liberty.

### **Integrating Rights with Duties:**

- Proponents of integration of duty with rights aim to treat otherwise non-binding obligations — the “fundamental duties” as Article 51A describes them on a par with, if not superior to, the various fundamental rights that the Constitution guarantees.

- In an inversion of the well-known dictum, they see duties, and not rights, as trumps.
- On Constitution Day last month, many Union Ministers used the occasion to underline this proposal.
- The government puts forward an idea that our rights ought to be made conditional on the performance of a set of extraneous obligations.

### **Issues with the Proposal**

- This suggestion is plainly in the teeth of the Constitution's text, language, and history.
- To the framers of the Constitution, the very idea of deliberating over whether these rights ought to be provisional, and on whether these rights ought to be made subject to the performance of some alien duty, was against the republic's vision.
- Imposing duties a legislative prerogative: The Constitution's framers saw the placing of mandates on individual responsibilities as nothing more than a legislative prerogative.
- For example, the legislature could impose a duty on individuals to pay a tax on their income, and this duty could be enforced in a variety of ways.
- If the tax imposed and the sanctions prescribed were reasonable, the obligations placed on the citizen will be constitutionally valid.
- In this manner, Parliament and the State legislatures have imposed a plethora of duties — duties to care for the elderly and for children; duties to pay tolls and levies; duties against causing harm to others; duties to treat the environment with care, the list is endless.
- Against Constitution: What is critical, though, is that these laws cannot make a person's fundamental right contingent on the performance of a duty that they impose.
- A legislation that does so will violate the Constitution.

### **Background:**

- The fundamental duties that are now contained in Article 51A were introduced through the 42<sup>nd</sup> constitutional amendment.
- The Swaran Singh Committee, which was set up during the Emergency, and which recommended the insertion of the clause, also suggested that a failure to comply with a duty ought to result in punishment.
- Ultimately, the amendment was introduced after the binding nature of the clause was removed.
- In its finally adopted form, Article 51A encouraged citizens to perform several duties.

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**Way Forward:**

- Know the precise nature of duties the rights create: The philosopher Onora O’Neill has argued with some force that we would do well to discuss the precise nature of duties that rights create.
- Unless we do so, our charters of human rights may not by themselves be enough.
- For example, we may want to ask ourselves if the promise of a right to free expression imposes on the state something more than a duty to forebear from making an unwarranted restriction on that liberty.
- Does it require the state to also work towards creating an equal society where each person finds herself in a position to express herself freely?

